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In heron haunts.

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# OUTING



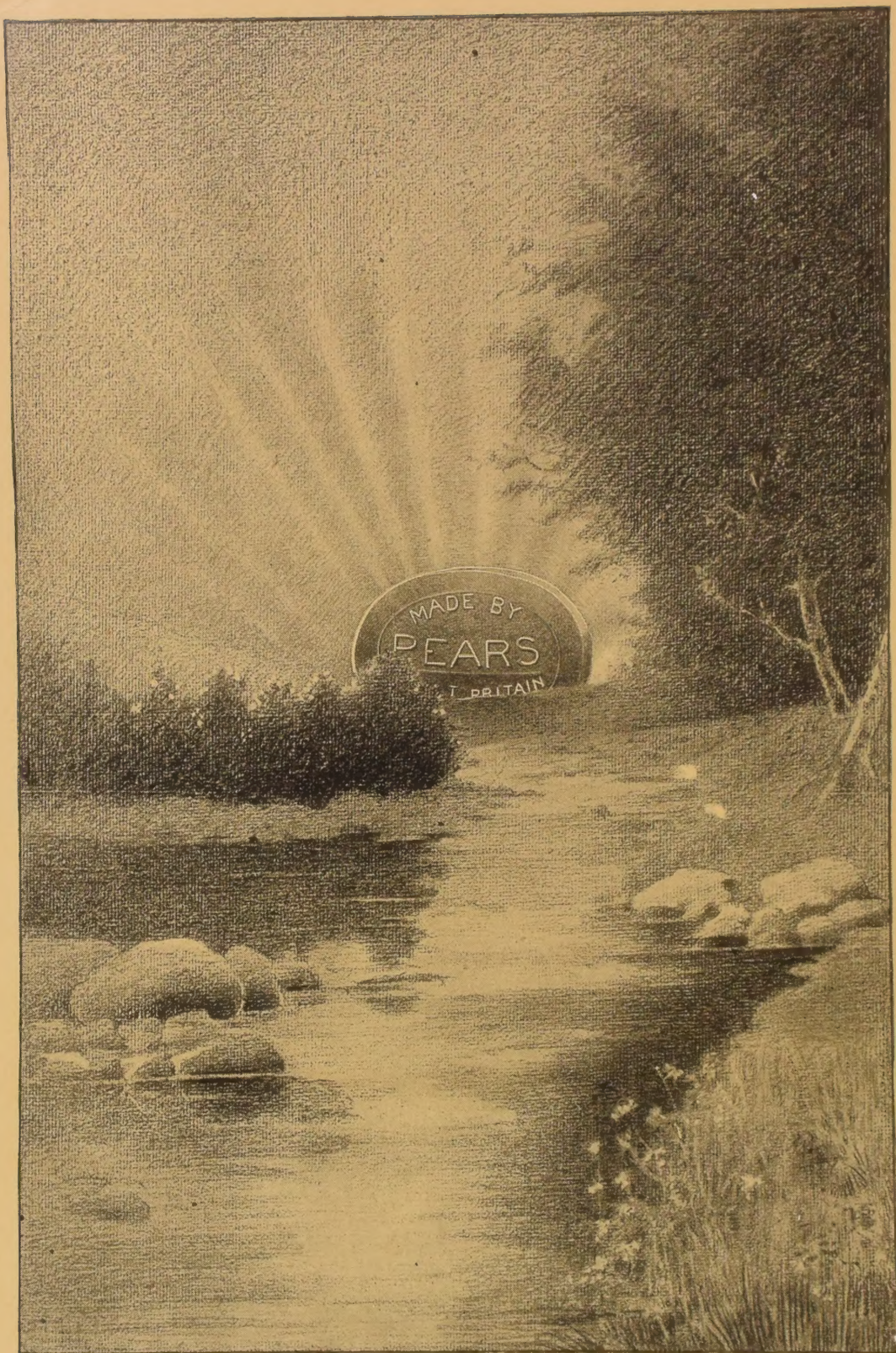
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## Big Game Shooting in British East Africa

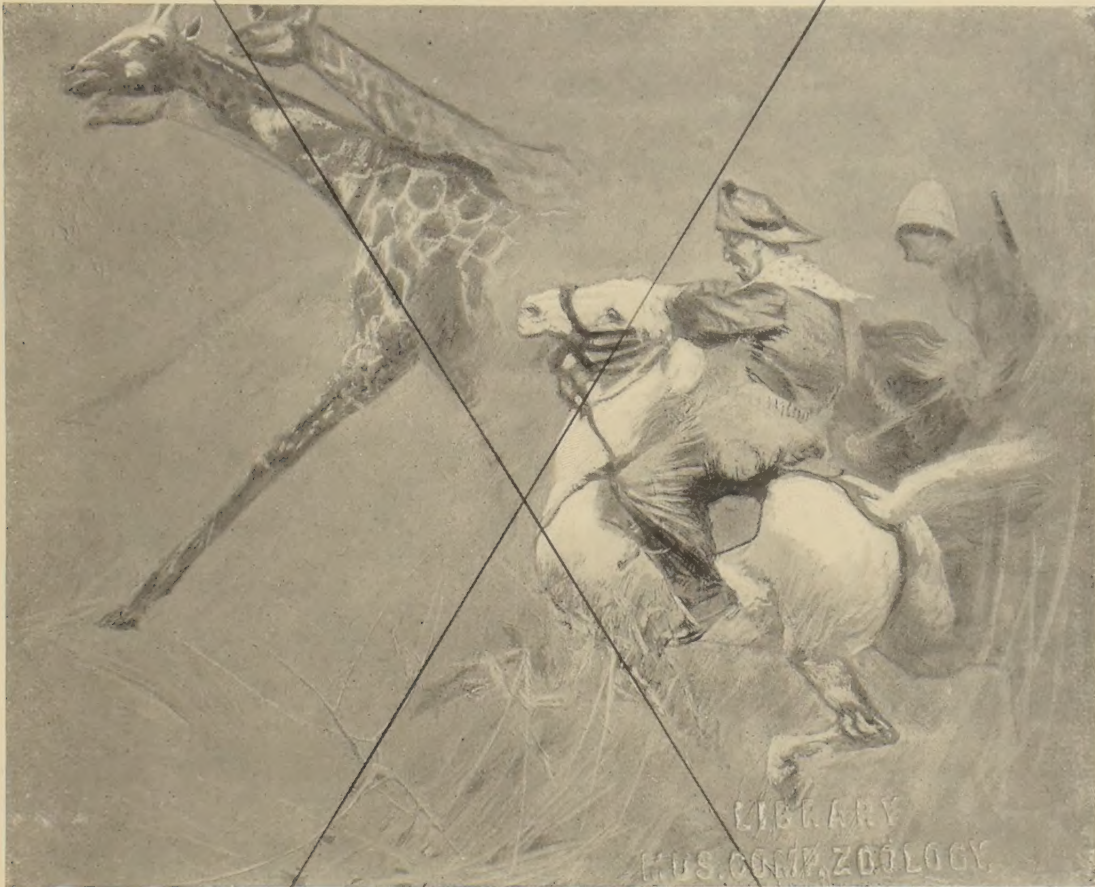
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yards, I planted a bullet in the sand within fifty yards of them. That brought them. I left one man in a tree as a guard over the giraffe, and went back to camp with the other, reaching there long after night. I sent some men back immediately to the giraffe with water and the means of making a fire. They cut it up, and brought it into camp next day. The flesh, to a white man, is detestable, but the marrow bones were excellent.

Another method of shooting giraffe is by

a large animal. Needless to say, a large bore rifle, such as a .577 express, cannot be used with comfort in the saddle.

Another animal met with in the scrub is the wild pig, and we managed to secure two or three fine pairs of tusks while coming down the river. One day we had halted for lunch, and, as the sun was absolutely broiling and there were no trees, we got the men to cut the inside out of a large bush. We crept into the hollow thus made, ate our frugal meal, and then slept a little, the

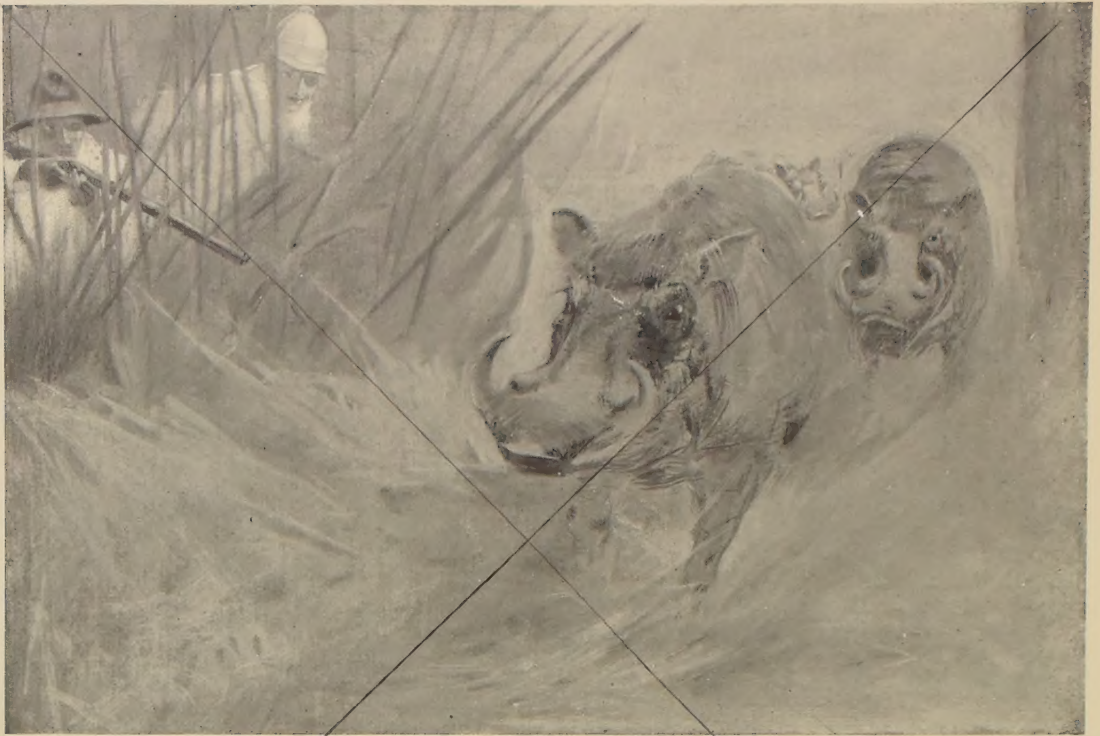


"One simply gallops after the giraffe at full speed to get alongside before it sees you and breaks away."

running them down on fast ponies. I have not done it myself, as we had no ponies with us. Dr. Horace, however, told me that he used to shoot them that way. On sighting the giraffe, one simply gallops after it full speed, and, getting alongside, dismounts and fires before it can get out of range. It is very seldom one can successfully shoot from a horse's back. I have heard of its being done, but it is a very unreliable method, and a small bore rifle needs to be used with the greatest precision to kill such

men doing likewise. We were awakened by some of the men pulling at our feet, and shouting, excitedly, "*Ungrove, Bwana!*" or "Pig, Master!" We looked out cautiously, and a large boar and three or four sows were feeding unconcernedly about thirty yards away. We had made no sound, and had no tents pitched, so that they almost literally walked into camp. Horace took his .450 express and dropped the old boar; the others made off into the grass. The boar lay perfectly still, and Horace made





"He took his .450 express and dropped the old boar."

so sure of his shot that he never even examined the beast, but, telling the men to bring it in, crept under the bush again. The men went to get it, when the boar suddenly jumped up and cleared out, although evidently badly wounded. As Horace was almost asleep again, I went after it,

and found it standing still, a good distance away. I got quite close, and shot it through the brain. Horace's bullet had gone through its shoulder, and it must have died soon anyhow. The flesh was horribly tough and absolutely tasteless—not in the least like pork.

## IN HERON HAUNTS

By HERBERT K. JOB

PHOTOGRAPHS BY THE AUTHOR

**O**FTEN have I been there—east, west, north, and south; in meadow, marsh, cedar swamp, cane brake, floating morass, spruce, and cypress forest; on northern and tropical islets; by lake side, river shore, and pool margin: wherever it is wet, where travel is hard and dangerous, where insect scourge is worst, where turtles splash

and snakes crawl, where rank growth, strong odors, and decay hold carnival: such are the heron haunts. Here is the advice of Gideon of old appropriate: "whosoever is fearful, let him return." But for those who love the wilds and their creatures, such places have rich reward.

The average heron—like the rest of us—



has two natures, though in a different way. At most times no title better describes him than "lone fisherman." He knows not the social delights of "the autocrat of the breakfast table"; silent and alone he wades along some margin, or slips through the tangles of the morass. Few eyes but those of rail, muskrat, or some such creature, witness the unerring stroke that lays low fish, frog, or wriggling snake, or the impulsive rush that often precedes it. But when the time for nesting comes, behold him in the rookery, amid a sea of nests, surrounded by squawking multitudes; and who would suspect him of his prevailing unsocial habit?

Throughout our northern and middle districts there are but five species of heron properly belonging to the region, though an occasional southerner loses his way and gives us a surprise. First is the high and lofty great blue heron, often wrongly called blue crane, the shyest of them all. Second in size is the black-crowned night heron, or "quawk," most common along the seacoast, though by no means confined to it, a beautiful bird of gray and dark green plumage in the adult phase—during breeding time, with a long white plume stream-

ing from the nape, the young being very different, of a mottled brown and white. Hardly smaller, our third, is the American bittern, "boomer" of the meadow, "stake-driver," "post-driver," and so on. More slender than the night heron, his plumage is enough like that of the young of that species to cause some confusion, though it is of a more yellowish cast, besides having broad black stripes on the sides of the neck. Number four is the green heron, "poke," or "skeowk"—as they call him down on Cape Cod; a little dark-colored fellow, the most generally distributed of them all, found in almost every marsh or swamp. Last, and smallest, is the least bittern, a tiny, yellowish-brown rail-like creature, that slips silently through the tangles of reed and waterplant, and keeps well out of sight of all but the determined lover of the water-birds.

To return to the great blue heron, my experience for years with the big fellow of the long legs and neck has been as of hermit with hermit. He was always alone, and, for my own part, I had to be alone to get anywhere near him; no talking is allowed in his laboratory; voices are so disturbing to his solitary meditations and researches as

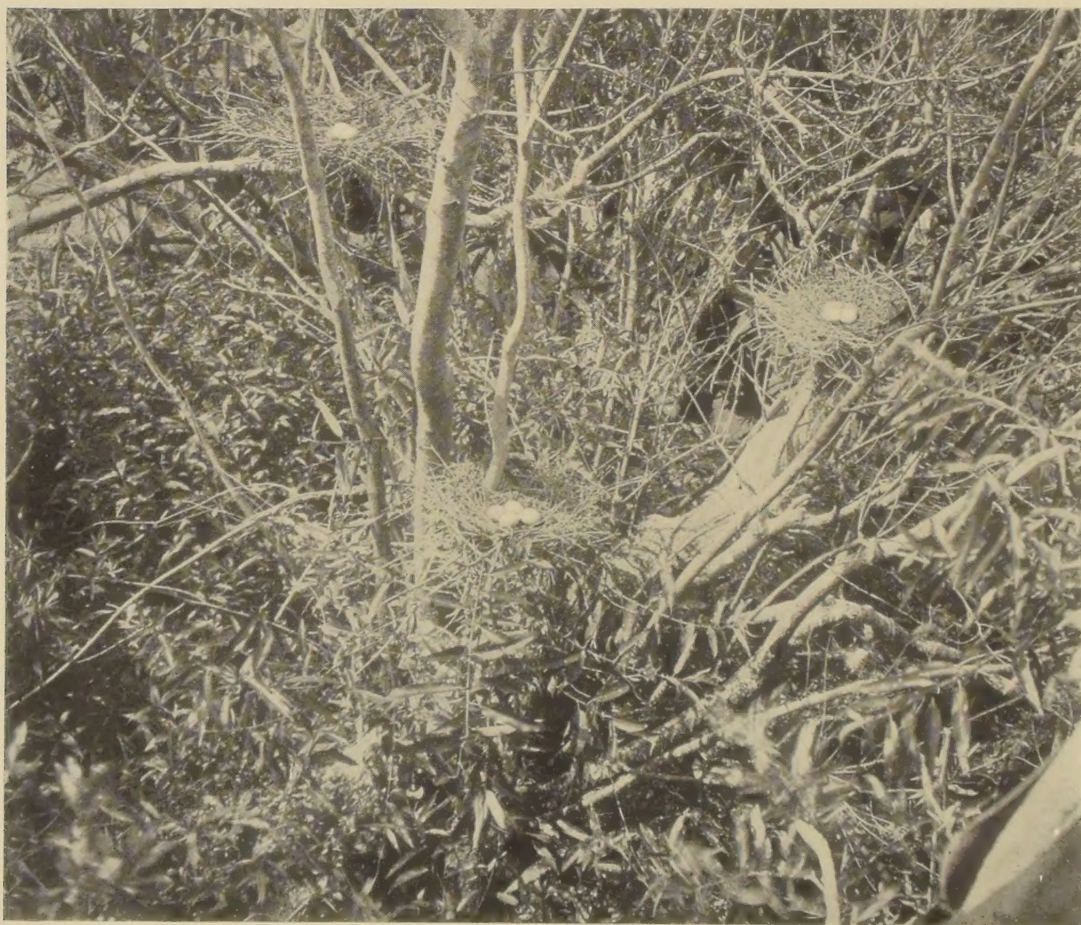


Green Heron on Nest.





Louisiana Herons in Florida Rookery—Telephoto.



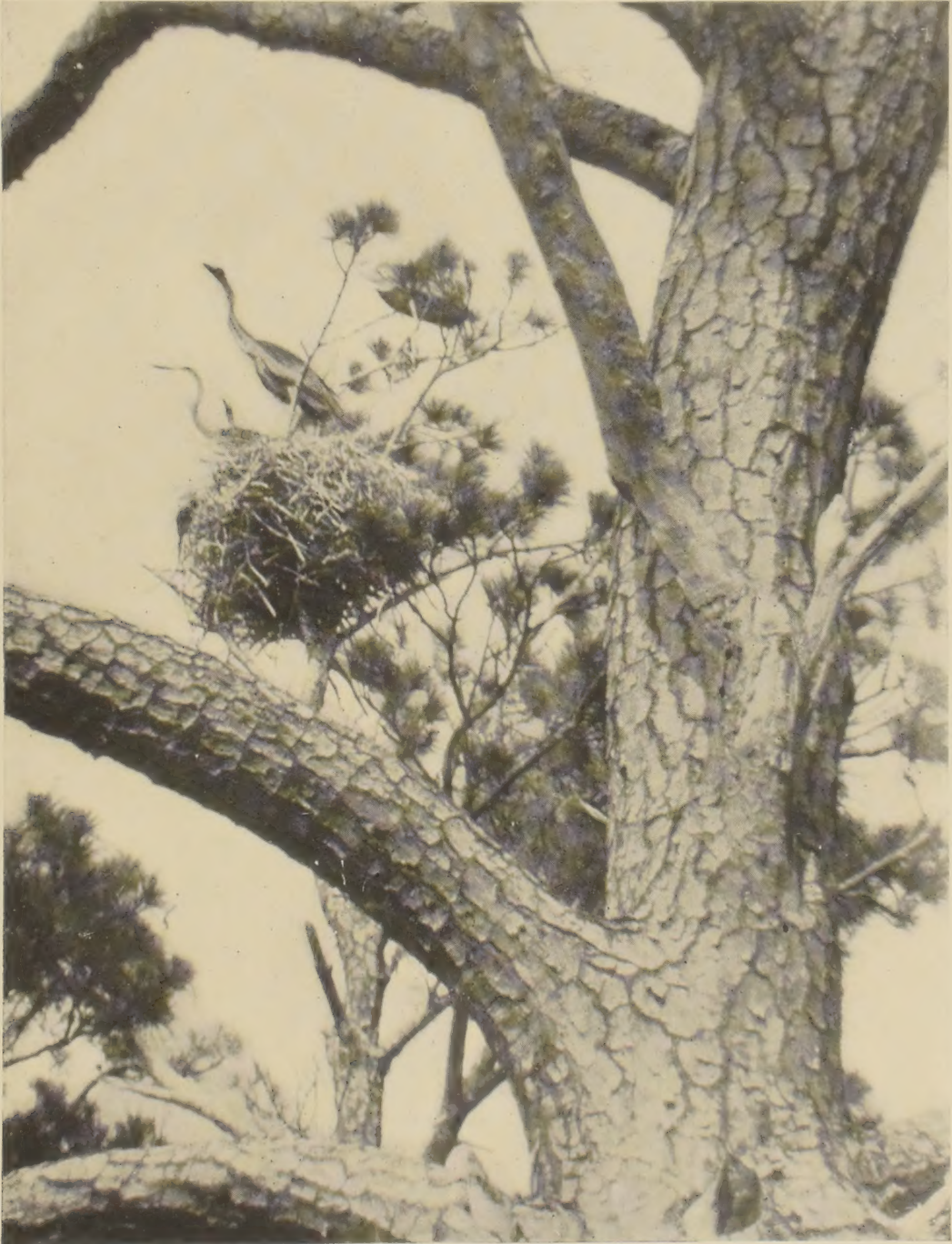
Typical Scene in Florida Rookery.



to cause him to depart with hasty, though heavy, flappings, neck doubled back and long legs dragging out behind, as is the heron-fashion. The latter members stand him in good stead, that is to say, in good deep water, well out from the shore of the marshy pond, where he will long remain silent and motionless, until, with sudden and accurate stroke of the great bill, some fish or reptile pays the death penalty. He seems

to be an anti-vivisectionist, for, rather than run the risk of torturing his captives, he swallows them whole, just as he receives them, and lets them settle the matter with the authorities below.

That the huge bill—half a foot long—is a terrible weapon, I once came near learning by costly experience. When a boy, on the shore of a woodland pond, I came across one of these herons, whose wing was injured



Great Blue Heron on Nest—Virginia Rookery.





View in the Great Florida Morass, Showing Island on Which Great Blue Herons Were Nesting.



so that it could not fly. It took to the water, and I followed (swimming). As I—crazy young fool—overtook it, and, exulting, was about to seize my prize, it suddenly shot out a terrific lunge of the great bill, intended for my right eye. Had I not succeeded in dodging, the outcome would have been very serious for me. Then followed a fight, which, though I finally came off victor, I have no desire ever to repeat.

For many years it was one of my ornitho-

off in the trackless spruce forest, there was certainly a small colony. We saw the great birds flying in and out, and a woodsman had once found the spot, where there were about a dozen nests, all high up on one enormous spruce tree. After a hard tramp, driven almost frantic by the mosquitoes, we were glad to get out, without having seen a heron.

In the North the elusive bird proved too much for me: but in Florida I found a few



Young Great Blue Heron.

logical ambitions to find a nest of the great blue heron. Watching one feeding, when it flew I would try to trace its line of flight: but this proved hopeless. Various expeditions were to no purpose. Once, up in northern Nova Scotia, I thought I had succeeded. People told me that there was a rookery on a certain island, but a trip there proved it to be only a roost after the breeding season. In the same region, somewhere

scattered nests, with young, about twenty feet from the ground, on the tops of low willow trees on an island in a great morass. In Virginia I had the best success, where, near the shore of Chesapeake Bay, I was shown a fine rookery. On enormous pines, growing in a forest along the edge of a lonely pond, where eagles and ospreys also bred, averaging over one hundred feet from the ground, were from fifty to a hundred





Nest of Green Heron—Connecticut.



Nest of American Bittern—Magdalen Islands.



great rude nests of sticks, each big enough to contain a man; but inaccessible, out on slender branches, even if one could climb the giant trees. There were but a few of these monsters that overtopped all the rest, and they were scattered about, but nearly every one

the shy owners flew off at our approach, watchful, but tamer, fish crows would occasionally alight in a nest and proceed to eat the eggs. By keeping very quiet under the trees, in the shrubbery, we avoided the notice of the old birds, which would return to their



Great Blue Heron and Nests—Virginia Rookery.

bore a nest or two: on one I counted eight. It was the first day of July, and in many of the nests young, sometimes full grown, were standing up, usually three to a nest. Other nests had eggs—probably second layings—as I could see without climbing, for, when

nests. In this way, having previously trained the camera, with telephoto lens, upon some nest, I was able to secure quite satisfactory pictures.

Sometimes, when the shades of evening are deepening into night, we may hear from



the gloom above a harsh, guttural "*quock, quock*," and know that it is a band of night herons winging their way to their marshy feeding ground. They care not whether it be city or country that may lie beneath their line of flight, and I have often heard them from the streets of Boston, as in small, loose flocks they steered for the flats or salt marshes. Usually, before morning, they are back in the thick of some cedar swamp, or similar roost; but frequently they will feed on the flats by day, especially the brown

sea. The tract consists mostly of scrub oaks, with a few maples and pitch pines sprinkled in, most of the trees not over thirty feet high. Late in April the rude, frail nests of loose sticks are built in any convenient crotch, usually about twenty feet up, though sometimes not over five feet. During the first ten days of May, most of the large, pale blue eggs are laid, four or five to a nest, which is the customary number with most herons. At this visit the first of the young were beginning to hatch. As we entered



Florida Heron Rookery. On this Island Were Breeding Louisiana, Little Blue, Snowy, and Yellow-Crowned Night Herons.

speckled young of the year. I have frequently surprised them in their fishing along the creeks of the salt marshes, or by ditches that connect ponds, through which young herring pass. And, by the way, it is really surprising how many people do not know the difference between a heron and a herring!

One of the strangest sights in bird-life is a rookery of these night herons. The largest that I know of is (or was) on Cape Cod. I discovered it when a boy, and year by year, probably from time immemorial, the herons have resorted to this lonely spot near the

the woods, the beautiful plumed birds, each with a loud, harsh squawk, began to fly out in large numbers. The trees, daubed white with excrement, were fairly crowded with nests, one in almost every possible fork or crotch, often six or eight to a tree. Standing in one place, I counted one hundred and five nests, without moving from my tracks. I think there were doubtless a thousand nests in that strip of woods. When I climbed to the tops of different trees, I found myself looking down upon a veritable blue sea eggs, eggs, eggs, in all



directions. Later, when the young are about half grown, standing in the nests or climbing out upon the branches, they are accustomed to receive even the well-intending visitor with volleys of half-digested fish, full in his face, as he climbs. One must go prepared, and take the will for the deed, for the youngsters really think that this is what is wanted. The rookery at this time is in a terribly unsanitary condition—from our standpoint. Everything is besmeared, fish lie rotting on the ground, the heat is terrific,

her nest with food for her hungry squabs, crack went a rifle, and four or five more helpless children were doomed to a lingering starvation. When I arrived, but a pitiful remnant of frightened birds was left. The deserted nests confirmed the story that I afterward gathered from certain residents. I picked up one beautiful, plumed creature, not yet dead, that had lingered with its thigh shot away, till the wound was a mass of gangrene. Language which would adequately express my feelings and properly charac-



Young Green Herons and Addled Egg.

and swarms of insects add their torments. Nevertheless it is a wonderfully instructive place, and I would gladly spend days in it.

This I hoped to do the past season, to study and photograph the family life of these herons, and journeyed over two hundred miles for no other purpose. Not even yet can I calmly contemplate the atrocity. Certain men, some residents, some visitors who probably consider themselves sportsmen, had gone there the season before, and early in the present season, for *rifle practise*! Hiding among the trees, when a mother heron alit on

terize these men and their act would not become my profession. The town of Barnstable has incurred a stain upon its name which can only be atoned for by taking the matter faithfully in hand, relentlessly punishing the guilty, and enforcing the law in future. Possibly the remnant of this natural wonder, that is of interest to the thousands of nature-lovers, may yet be saved, and the rookery in time be repopulated, if exempted from future depredations.

Out in North Dakota, where trees are





Young of American Bittern.

scarce, the night herons build their cities low down, on rude platforms of dead stems among the reeds that grow from the water in marshy sloughs or along the shores of lakes. Even where there is a timber-strip nearby, they seem to have lost the habit, in the prairie country, of being arboreal.

It is usually in reedy bogs—the boggier the better—that we are most likely to find the common bittern. By hiding or sneaking in such a place, I have been enabled to watch the queer fellow under various circumstances. Gracefully he steps along, or runs through some tangle, but when he stops, almost always he points his bill up in the air, making himself so closely resemble a dead reed or rush that it is very hard to distinguish him. But the making of his booming, or pumping note is the queerest performance. He works his head and neck up and down as though he were choking, and the

sound made is remarkably like that produced by an old-fashioned wooden pump: first the ictus, then the gurgling of the water. At a distance, only the first part can be heard, which certainly sounds like the blow of a mallet on a stake, or even an axe-stroke.

For years I could never find a bittern's nest, though I searched thickets and jungles—all sorts of places but the right ones. Finally, one day, when I was wading a reedy bog, a great brown bird sprang up almost into my face, leaving four brownish-drab eggs on a little platform of dead rushes. Since then I have found scores of these nests—in New England, the Magdalen Islands, and North Dakota. Though both our bitterns are more unsocial than most herons in their nesting habits, half a dozen or more nests of either kind may be found in the same bog. Such has been my experience



with the present species on the Magdalen Islands. The bittern sits "close"; especially on rainy days I have been near enough to them on their nests almost to touch them without their starting, until our glances met; then there would be a wild scramble. They sit motionless, with bill pointed up, making themselves part of the surroundings.

Almost every one who goes much afield has seen the green heron jump out of a ditch or pond-hole with shrill scream. Not so many have seen the nest and bluish eggs in some low tree or bush of a cedar, alder, or other swampy tangle. There these herons breed, sometimes only a single pair, but just as often half a dozen or more, not close together, but near enough for sociability. If intruded upon when there are young, I know of no heron that will make greater fuss and outcry.

I never realized more acutely the timidity of herons as a class than when I first tried to photograph one on its nest—a green heron, it happened to be. The nest was on a low alder, about four feet, over water more than knee deep. Setting the camera up on the

tripod, about six feet away, trimming it with branches and attaching a long thread, I hid on a hummock sixty feet off. After forty minutes of flying about anxiously, I saw the little mother sneak along the alder branches, climbing or hopping from one to the other, jerking her funny little tail up and down in a most ridiculous, nervous fashion. After long hesitation she finally settled on her eggs, just for an instant, when, with a sudden spring, she was gone. She had seen the movement of the thread, as I had begun to gather in the slack.

The least bittern is not much larger than the sora, or other small rail. Like these, it enjoys slipping through the tangles of the bog, where I have often found its nest, a frail little platform suspended between the stems of reeds and buoyed up by the dead undergrowth above the water, with its four or five faint blue eggs. At times several nests will be quite near together, but it is rarely that one can see the owner, unless by silently approaching in a boat, when, taken by surprise, she will sometimes fly.

Florida is still the heron paradise, though



Louisiana Heron Approaching Nest in Florida Rookery—Telephoto.



the plume-hunters—fortunately now outlawed—have left but a pitiful remnant. Only a few stragglers can be seen near towns and railroads. To find them I had to drive off into the wilderness, where a party of us camped on the edge of a great morass, under a clump of fine cabbage palms, far from human habitation, where “gators” bellowed, deadly moccasins abounded, and wild cattle, razor-backed hogs, mosquitoes, and reptiles did their best to make us miserable. The great morass was four miles across and some dozen in length, with water from three to eight feet in depth, overgrown with saw grass and various aquatic plants, through which, with great labor, we had to pole our boat. Here and there, out in this expanse, were small, low islands covered with willow thickets. Here, late in April, we found herons, by hundreds and even thousands, nesting. May no plume-hunter find them; they never will through me! Of the familiar five of the north, I found there all but the larger bittern. Commonest of all was the beautiful azure-blue Louisiana heron, and next the little blue heron; these were the

two abundant kinds. They bred together on the same islets, along with a few yellow-crowned and black-crowned night herons, and the beautiful aigrette-bearing snowy heron. This kind, with the larger American egret, seemed almost to have been made extinct. But the other sorts that do not bear plumes were here still numerous enough to fairly crowd the willows with their frail nests and blue eggs. As we poled along in the boat, they flew out by hundreds.

A final word about photographing the herons. For working on their nests or young in trees, I use a ball and socket clamp with the camera, and screw a bolt into the trunk or branch, on which to clamp the instrument. By leaving the camera focused on a nest, concealed as much as possible, patience *may* finally be rewarded, after many tribulations and the expenditure of much time. As herons are in the habit of standing still for quite an interval, I find the telephoto lens especially useful, either operated from concealment in the rookery, or from some cover along the edge of shores where herons are wont to feed.





Annie G. Pickett

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